

## Memorandum

To : Environmental Services

Date: 14 May 1973

**RECEIVED**  
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From : Department of Fish and Game  
Bruce Elliott - South Bay Unit

ALAMEDA COUNTY  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Subject: Diamond A (Apperson Ranch) Development

This date I accompanied the owner of the Apperson Ranch and his design staff on a field survey of all those portions of the ranch proposed for development into a guest ranch complex. The purpose of the trip was to provide comments on possible Department objections to aspects of this project, and simultaneously to provide Mr. Apperson with information to supplement that provided in the Ecological Appraisal prepared Maynard Cummings, especially in regard to the riparian. Since the completion of the E.I.R. by the Alameda County Planning Department are suspended pending receipt by that office of a letter from our Department stating our views on this development, the following comments derived from today's field investigation follow.

Study of topographical maps followed by ground survey of all major watercourses and most of the minor rivulets indicate that no significant run-off changes will occur to alter the present encinal forest that envelopes the north-facing slope where all portions of the development on the project will occur. All water destined for the development comes from springs already in operation on the property. The seeps of the project, contained within the ridge slope area and on the extreme north edge of the ranch away from the wilder areas of the Regional Park, suggest no significant effect on any of the larger mammals (the local deer population has already been drastically reduced by illegal poaching pressure from squatters in the Welch Creek Read area on the far southern boundary of the ranch, near Sunol Park).

It is unlikely that any effect of this development will affect the Prairie Falcons nesting on Flag Hill; these birds have persisted in maintaining their eyrie at this site in spite of intense pressure from falconers and 100,000 annual visitors to the park area at the foot of the cliffs where the eyrie is located. There are two major ridges (of fenced private land) between this eyrie and the Apperson development (a distance of over two air miles). Mr. Apperson has agreed to route any traffic into his emergency heliport facility so as to swing well around San Antonio Reservoir and thus avoid any disturbance to waterfowl and Bald Eagles using this area in the winter. Also, anticipated reduced winter visitor use of the proposed facility and the lower winter problems of helitac fire control operations combine to reduce this problem.

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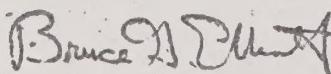
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The foregoing should provide suitable answers to the questions raised by the letter of Alan Pistorius of Golden Gate Audubon. With reference to the Sunol Park Wilderness Coalition letter, this writer talked with Mr. Apperson and examined correspondence provided by him from various State and local agencies contesting to the questions contained in paragraphs 1 through 3 of that letter. These are all items presently approved by the Alameda County Planning Department. Paragraph 4 concerning the wildlife is partially answered on the previous page. There are no permanent streams in the development area, and no other fisheries, warm-water or otherwise. The sewage treatment plant design accepted by the County will preclude any contamination of the nearby San Francisco Water Company reservoir (which in any event is not open to the public for fishing). The deer population will not be adversely affected as it has become almost non-existent due to illegal pressure from the Sunol wilderness squatters (in fact, deer numbers may actually increase with the trespass protection projected for the development). There are no rare or endangered species in the area.

The major objection of the local County Planning Department (and the major point that they requested specific reference to in our formal letter regarding the project) was the lack of comment by the Cummings report on the effects to the riparian. The answer to that is simple: there is very little to be effected. This project is to be established on a north-facing slope which is covered with a open encinal savannah-woodland. Almost all of the water-courses (all the major ones, with the one exception noted below) flow only part of the year and support no riparian growth in the sense of a willow and/or alder/sycamore/cottonwood vegetation. The same species of oak that dot the hillside occur down to the stream bed which is hardly a foot or so wide. Even in this year of nearly-record rainfall, most streams have already ceased to flow. The only exception is the South Fork of Apperson Creek and the major portion of this riparian is upstream from the project and thus unlikely to be effected by the proposed development. Note again, that all proposed water resources will come from already long-established springs not related to the stream courses.

It is true that this development contributes nothing substantial to the enhancement of existing wildlife resources in this area, but it seems to have no significant detrimental effect. The project is on private land that is zoned for this activity, and it is certainly better to have this sort of project, located well away from the northern boundary of the Regional Park than to have the area carved up into homesites. It is obvious from the quality of the existing range and vegetation that Mr. Apperson is interested in conserving the quality of his land while making a profit from what it has to offer and I see no objection to the project if all the other considerations required by the County and mentioned above are fulfilled.



Bruce G. Elliott  
Unit Manager-Biologist

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